

Message Text

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ACTION EA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3797

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

US MISSION USUN NEW YORK 855

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 19216

LIMDIS

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E O 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, RP

SUBJ: ROMULO REDUX

1. CARLOS P. ROMULO, PHILIPPINE FOREIGN SECRETARY, ADMITS TO BEING 77 YEARS OLD. HISTORICAL EVIDENCE WOULD SUGGEST THAT HE IS AT LEAST 79. HE HAS A WIDESPREAD REPUTATION AS A JOURNALIST, AUTHOR, ORATOR, EDUCATOR AND DIPLOMAT, AND IS ONE OF THE FOUNDING FATHERS OF THE UNITED NATIONS.

2. BECAUSE OF THIS REPUTATION AND BECAUSE OF HIS OWN INSTINCT FOR SURVIVAL, HE HAS BEEN RETAINED AS FOREIGN SECRETARY IN THE MARCOS NEW SOCIETY, EVEN THOUGH HE IS AN OUTSIDER TO ITS CENTERS OF POWER AND CUT OFF FROM ITS DECISION MAKING. HOWEVER, HIS WIDE INTERNATIONAL ACQUAINTANCES AND HIS ORATORICAL AND PROPAGANDA SKILLS HAVE CAUSED MARCOS TO CONSIDER HIM AN ASSET TO HIS REGIME.

3. RECENTLY, THE VALUE OF THAT ASSET HAS BEGUN TO BE
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QUESTIONED. IMELDA MARCOS, WHO HAS ACQUIRED A GREAT TASTE

FOR WHAT SHE CALLS DIPLOMACY, HAS TRAVELLED WIDELY AND KNOWS MOST OF THE INTERNATIONAL FIGURES ROMULO KNOWS, ESPECIALLY IN THE THIRD WORLD. MOREOVER, ROMULO'S GENERATION IS RAPIDLY DISAPPEARING FROM THE WORLD SCENE. IMELDA HAS COME TO FEEL THAT SHE IS A BETTER REPRESENTATIVE OF THE NEW SOCIETY THAN ROMULO.

4. OTHER ASPECTS OF ROMULO'S FUNCTIONS HAVE BEGUN TO DISINTEGRATE. HE HAS LOST CONTROL OVER THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND HIS TWO UNDER SECRETARIES FEUDE TO SUCH A DEGREE THAT THEY DON'T SPEAK TO EACH OTHER. HIS GRANDSON IS INVOLVED IN A NASTY RAPE CASE WHICH HAS CAUSED INTERNAL DISRUPTION IN THE ROMULO FAMILY. HE HAS EITHER MARRIED OR IS ABOUT TO MARRY HIS CONSTANT CONSORT, AMERICAN JOURNALIST BETH DAY, WHO HAS NO INTENTION OF BECOMING A PHILIPPINE CITIZEN.

5. FOR ALL THESE REASONS, AND AS A FILLIP TO HIS FANTASIES, ROMULO HAS PREFERRED TO STAY AT LEAST HALF OF EVERY YEAR IN THE GILDED GLORY OF THE WALDORF ASTORIA, HOSTING AND BEING HOSTED BY AMERICAN DOWAGERS, GOING TO THE THEATER AND OTHERWISE IGNORING THE TRAVAILS OF MANILA. THIS YEAR, HIS ABSENCE HAS CAUSED INCREASINGLY VOCAL COMPLAINTS, WHICH HAVE BROKEN OUT INTO THE PRESS AND MUST HAVE REACHED ROMULO'S EARS IN NEW YORK.

6. HIS REACTION HAS BEEN THAT OF AN OLD-TIME FLACK. HE HAS SENT HOME A STEADY STREAM OF PRESS REPORTS ABOUT HIS "SUCSESSES" IN THE UN. HIS PICTURE, WITH WALDHEIM, OR AMERSINGHE, OR HUANG HUA, OR SCRANTON, IS CONSTANTLY IN THE MANILA PRESS. HE HAS REPORTED VERBATIM HIS 30-SECOND CONVERSATION WITH MRS. JIMMY CARTER. HE HAS SOMEHOW BEEN ABLE TO PERSUADE PERENNIAL PATSY JAMES COUSINS TO GIVE HIM A BANQUET AND A MEDAL. ALL OF THIS HAS BEEN INTENDED TO SHOW MARCOS THAT HE IS AN INDISPENSABLE MAN.

7. HOWEVER, HIS MOST CAREFULLY CALCULATED COUP HAS COME A CROPPER. HE APPARENTLY CONCLUDED THAT HE COULD BEST PROVE HIS WORTH BY REACHING AN AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE WITH SECRETARY KISSINGER ON THE U.S. MILITARY BASE NEGOTIATIONS.

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ALTHOUGH ALL THE FACTS ARE NOT KNOWN HERE, HE APPARENTLY ACTED ON HIS OWN INITIATIVE IN SEEKING A MEETING FOR THAT PURPOSE WITH THE SECRETARY WHILE BOTH WERE IN MEXICO CITY. SINCE HE HAD BEEN MERELY ACTING AS A MESSENGER BOY IN THESE NEGOTIATIONS, CARRING MEMORANDA DRAFTED BY DEFENSE SECRETARY ENRILE AND SOLICITOR GENERAL MENDOZA, HE PLUNGED OVER HIS HEAD INTO ELEMENTS HE DIDN'T REMOTELY UNDERSTAND AND MADE AN "AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE" WHICH WAS QUITE

CLEARLY IN CONTRAST TO OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE MARCOS-
ENRILE-MENDOZA POSITION ON THIS ISSUE.

8. HE APPARENTLY CONVEYED THIS "AGREEMENT" TO MARCOS AS A
U.S. PROPOSAL AND MARCOS PROMPTLY REJECTED IT. IF THE
AFFAIR HAD ENDED THERE, IT WOULD HAVE MERELY REPRESENTED
ONE LAST EFFORT BY THE OLD TROUPER TO MAKE A COMEBACK
AND ITS FAILURE WOULD BE KNOWN ONLY TO THE FEW U.S.
OFFICIALS WHO WERE AWARE OF IT. BUT POOR OLD ROMULO FAILED
TO CALCULATE THAT WASHINGTON IS A LEAKY SIEVE AND THE WHOLE
THING WAS VERY SHORTLY IN THE PRESS.

9. ROMULO'S INSTINCT FOR SURVIVAL IMMEDIATELY ASSERTED
ITSELF. HE INSISTED TO THE PRESS THAT HE HAD NEVER MADE
ANY AGREEMENT. HE SAID "SOMEONE IN THE STATE DEPARTMENT"
WAS TRYING TO PRESSURE HIM. HE ATTEMPTED TO PORTRAY
HIMSELF AS THE SAVIOR OF PHILIPPINE HONOR. HE SUGGESTED
THAT DEMOCRATS ALWAYS TREATED FILIPINOS BETTER ANYHOW. HE
COUNTED ON THE PHILIPPINE PRESS COMING TO HIS SUPPORT
AND MAKING HIM A HERO, AND THEREFORE ONCE AGAIN
INDISPENSABLE.

10. UNFORTUNATELY FOR ROMULO, THE CLAUQUE IS NO LONGER HIS.
AFTER A FEW PERFUNCTORY EDITORIAL COMMENTS ON THE PERFIDY
OF AMERICANS, THE MATTER HAS BEEN DROPPED FROM PUBLIC VIEW
HERE IN MANILA. THERE HAS BEEN NO RPT NO PUBLIC EXPRESSION
OF SUPPORT FOR ROMULO. THE WORD IS WHISPERED THAT MARCOS
WAS ANNOYED WITH THE ENTIRE ROMULO PERFORMANCE AND
INSTRUCTED HIM TO REFRAIN FROM ANY FURTHER COMMENT.

11. IT APPEARS, THEREFORE, THAT ONE OF THE OLDEST,
PERMANENTLY ESTABLISHED, FLOATING FOREIGN SECRETARIES MAY
BE COMING TO THE END OF THE LINE. AS THEY SAY IN THE
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SALOONS, HE HAS SEEN HIS BETH DAYS.
SULLIVAN

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NNN

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